

Don't You Think?

Opinion by Matthew Heimbürger, Contributing Writer

Fall is in the air. In the natural world this entails the mellow bronzing of leaves, the lowering of the water table, and shorter periods of daylight. But along with crisp morning temperatures and the occasional woodsmoke, there is a discernible shift in mood from summer to autumn. In the human world, for example, fall represents the end of the vacation season and the beginning of a new work or school year. Adults, who have lived without a true summer vacation for quite some time, still feel the changeover and lament it. But for teenagers, the shift is a mixed bag.

The back-to-school rite is a time to renew friendships and to make new ones; to usher back in the prom season and the popularity contests; to buy and exhibit the latest fashions; to warm up the driver's ed car; to use the meat squad to train the special teams; to come up with rhymes for obscure mascots. Indeed, the social function of public education in America has been the source of joy and pain for millions upon millions of American schoolchildren since the dream of public education caught on in the 19th Century.

Indeed, the only thing missing from this great annual celebratory ritual seems to be education itself.

For many students, the thought of reading, writing, and arithmetic; of homework and the intellectual rigors of school is a distant memory. The curriculum includes Yoga, and aer-

that public education was to be the means of bringing the masses into the light of knowledge, that utopian dream is in trouble. Don't get me wrong—the masses are being educated, but the light of knowledge itself is in danger of going out for too many of our young people.

When was the last time you heard any young person say "I can't wait to get back into the geometry of Pythagoras!" Or, "I think I'll read King Lear now so I'll be better prepared to discuss its allusions come November." Or, "Perhaps this year I'll finally come to understand the reasons behind war." Some will be quick to answer that these obscure subjects hold no relevance to "real life" and therefore would fail to capture the attention of any typical human being, except for a mathematician, English teacher, or politician, respectively. Moreover, for the rest of us, such intellectual preoccupations come off as pretentious and stuffy—to express them is to be instantly unpopular. Besides, some will say, there is no money in any of them. No money means no value.

I disagree. Such utilitarian requirements for educational validity depend on a perverse logic: we judge the worth of knowledge against the requirements of a specialized society that has lost the ability to judge the worth of anything outside its own socio-economic niches within the larger market economy. In the older kids are always there to help by scholastic ability. "It is great because

EDUCATION

Education With A Twist

Mountain Montessori School is helping enhance

Khara' Klein, Contributing Writer

Children are the lifeblood pumping through the veins of society. Education is one of the most important gifts bestowed upon them. The debate surrounding advantages between public vs. private schooling runs deep. Montessori schools are included in this debate. Diane Thomas is the proprietor of the Mountain Montessori school located in Heber City. The school is going on its fifth year.

Most do not know what a Montessori school entails. The Montessori method was born in 1898. Maria Montessori, a physician involved in the intellectual studies of children, was in belief that the senses played an enormous role in how children learn. The use of order and logic are used to nurture each individual child to his/her full potential. Everyone learns information in their own distinct way. The Montessori method strives to recognize this and give each individual child the tools, environment and pace to which their minds absorb educational information.

Mountain Montessori School, like most Montessorios, thrives on the non-traditionally structured atmosphere. The children are not separated so much by age as

peers. I won't push them if it is not time," states Thomas.

In the Mountain Montessori School each room is for a different study. There is a room for math, one for science, as well as one for geography, history and art. An impressive addition is the language room where one can learn Spanish, and the computer room. The children will rotate from one area of study to another. This gives them a chance to get all of the ants out of their pants. No child is limited to his/her surroundings. The children are given contracts that detail their daily assignments, and then they must govern themselves accordingly. The Montessori method takes most of the lecturing out of the learning environment and replaces it with a hands on approach. In turn, giving the children a sense of accomplishment, and also one of responsibility. There are few rules and having daily contracts helps them to feel trusted and in charge of their education. This sounds like a lot of responsibility for a youngster, but an assurance is made that kids are highly intelligent and given the right environment will bloom like sunflowers in the morning sun.

Integrating a variety of experiences into

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Now, to ignore the economic aspects of our publicly-funded education system-K through college-is to be ignorant of modern, Big Education reality. But to consider knowledge and the search for truth as mere commodities suggests a larger problem.

I've been amazed at the number of advertisements I've seen this year suggesting that the tedium of education can be temporarily relieved by soft drinks, clothing, and fast food. These commercials are anything but subtle. They reinforce the idea that school-and by extension learning itself-is boring; a necessary evil that is only necessary because students have no political rights to challenge the system. Our students, then, become the dregs in a Dio album cover: a procession of enslaved youth-forced to memorize, forced to learn-really only wanting to live and let live, and party 'til it's 1999. They may have to go to school, but once there, no one can force them to learn!

The problem with such a conspiratorial view is that there is no one forcing our children to embrace education and knowledge but ourselves. We decided as a society to make public education possible in the last century-to spread the benefits of a liberal arts education to the masses as opposed to the elite few who had always used said benefits to their own advantage. Our actions were inherently democratic-"All men (and women) are created equal"/"pursuit of happiness" and all that. There was a time when the pursuit of education was seen as a major part of the pursuit of happiness.

we be concerned that ACT scores are dropping in some Utah school districts, or that American students are no longer interested in math and science? Our politicians tell us that it's because we'll lose ground in the global marketplace; that we won't have trained employees for tomorrow's high-tech jobs. As if systematic measures can determine the worth of children and their minds on any old abacus. I say that we should care because we're losing thousands of years of accumulated knowledge, discovery, and wisdom; we're feeding our hungry children trivia and "marketability" instead of knowledge. This, even as we stand on the backs of those who worked so hard to accumulate it in the first place.

Remember that kids who hate knowledge or the stamina required to gain it grow up and eventually raise kids who will very likely feel the same way. Over several generations, that view will predominate in society, and-despite hard-working and diligent parents and teachers-that accumulated aversion will have frightening consequences for our civilized society.

What will it mean when we entrust the wisdom of all human existence to the hearts and minds of our youth, and they throw it aside to play Mortal Kombat III? At a time when technology will put us in touch with almost any bit of knowledge, almost instantly, we will lack the critical discernment to use it to its greatest good. And the scary thing is, if you cultivate the hatred of learning, you never know what other bodies of knowledge will be sifted through and discarded: jurisprudence, aesthetics, ethics, diplomacy, justice, truth?

Watching young children explore the signs of fall: crunching leaves underfoot, smelling that pinesmoke in the air, being wide-eyed at the harvest moon, should remind us that all are born with a natural curiosity about the world and life within it. We exist at the apex of all that has come before, and yet we are poised to throw away this "fulness of times" using the very freedom that it was designed to produce.

That's a little ironic, don't you think?

Matthew Heimburger is a teacher of American history and literature at UVSC-Wasatch Campus and at BYU.

He lives with his wife and son here in Heber Valley.



*Sugar and spice
and everything nice.*

*That's what dull stories are
made of. Rats and mice and things
that go bump in the night. That's
what The Courier's Creepy
Contest is made of.*

See page 2 for details.

Movers & Shakers

Recently opening in Midway is The Originals Shop which features custom clothing designed and sewn by the shop's owner, Ann Zuspann. The shop features custom children's dance wear, workout clothing, ski suits, designer pillows, golf bags and a variety of other items.

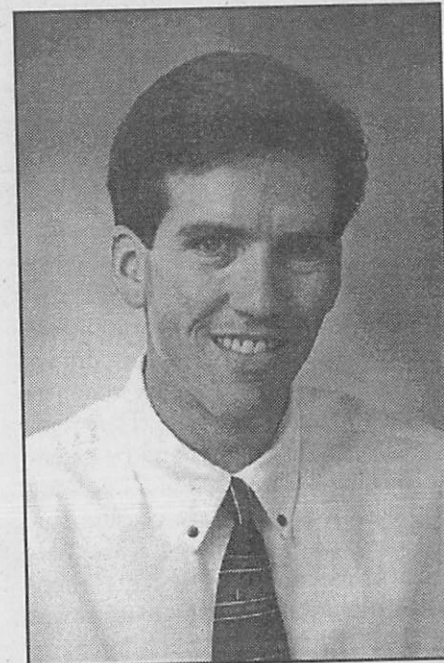
Zuspann studied sewing and pattern making at the University of Arizona in Tuscon and has been in business since 1985. She recently located her business in Midway at the corner of Center and Main. The shop is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and she can be reached at 657-2494.

Zuspann is pictured at right.

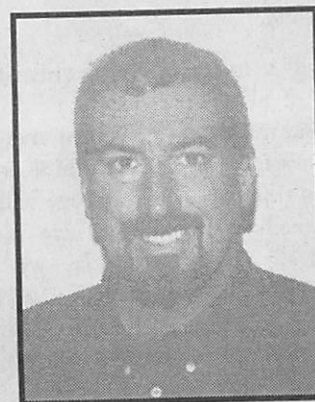


Wasatch County's newest dentist is Dr. Reed Lobrot. This week he will be opening his clinic, Wasatch Family Dentistry at 906 S. Main St..(6S4-500) The clinic features a relaxing environment where patients can watch movies on overhead T.V.'s or just listen to soothing music during treatment. Dr. Lobrot will be one of the few dentists in Utah to restore cavities using a state-of-the-art laser. About 90% of patients require no anesthetic whatsoever when treated with the laser. Reed graduated from the University of Utah and completed his D.D.S. at Creighton University. He and his wife, Stephanie, have three children. They love living in "the most beautiful valley in Utah."

Dr. Reed is pictured at right.



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